

# Psalm 101— Logotechnical Analysis

## Guidelines

- Please read the [General Introduction](#) as well as the Introduction to [Book I](#) and [Book IV](#).
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see the [Key to the charts](#).

## Specific features of Psalm 101

- Psalm 101 has an exceptionally regular structure, in terms of its poetical building blocks: it has **7** strophes in a menorah pattern, with **14** (2 x 7) verselines and **28** (4 x 7) cola, throughout determined by the number of fullness. It shares this feature with Psalm 100.
- In Canto I (vs. 1-5), the **7** actions intended by the speaker are also in a menorah pattern. For typical series of seven, compare, e.g., Psalms 8, 19, 29, 67, 92, 103, 148, and 150.
- In terms of positive and negative intentions of the speaker, Canto I divides into 22 words describing his **4 positive** intentions, and **26** describing the **3 negative** ones.

## Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 1-2, 3-4, 5 || 6, 7, 8 (2 cantos with 6 strophes, 14 verselines and 28 cola).
- Fokkelman and Labuschagne: 1-2b, 2c-3b, 3c-4, 5 || 6, 7, 8 (finding 7 strophes).

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words describing **4 positive** actions; **d**: words describing **3 negative** actions.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	לְדוֹר מְזֻמָּוֹר	Heading	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>		
	1	חֶסֶד-וּמִשְׁפָּט אֲשִׁירָהּ	3	3	3	
		לֵךְ יְהוָה אֲזַמְּרָה:	3		3	
2	2	אֲשַׁכִּילָה בְּדַרְךְ תָּמִים	3	3	3	
		מִתִּי תָבוֹא אֵלַי	3	3	3	
	<b>Strophe 1</b>	<b>Total, v. 1-2b</b>	12	= 9	+ 3	12 + 0
	3	אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתֵם-לִבִּי	3		3	
		בְּקָרֵב בֵּיתִי:	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>	
		Total, v. 1-2	17	= 9	+ 8	= 17 + 0
3	4	לֹא-אֲשִׁית לְנֹגֵד עֵינַי	4	4		4
		דְּבַר-בְּלִיעַל	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
	<b>Strophe 2</b>	<b>Total, v. 2c-3b</b>	11	= 6	+ 5	= 5 + 6
	5	עֲשֵׂה-סִטִּים שְׁנֵאתִי	3	3		3
		לֹא יִדְבַק בִּי:	3		3	3
4	6	לִבִּי עָקַשׁ יִסּוֹר מִמֶּנִּי	4	4		4
		רַע לֹא אֲדַע:	<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
		Total, v. 4	7	= 4	+ 3	= 0 + 7
	<b>Strophe 3</b>	<b>Total, v. 3c-4</b>	13	= 7	+ 6	= 0 + 13
		Total, v. 1-4	36	= 22	+ 14	= 17 + 19
5	7	מִלֹּשְׁנֵי בִסְתֵר רַעְהוּ	3	3	3	
		Middle word: 81 = 40 + 1 + 40	2	2	2	
	8	גְּבַה־עֵינַיִם וְרַחֵב לִבִּי	4	4		4
		Meaningful centre	<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
		Middle strophe: <b>Strophe 4</b>	12	= 9	+ 3	= 5 + 7
		<b>Canto I</b>	48	= 31	+ 17	= 22 + 26

6	עֵינֵי בְּנֵאֲמֵי־אֶרֶץ 9	3	3	3
	לְשֶׁבֶת עַמִּדֵי	2	2	2
	הֲלֹךְ בְּדַרְךְ תָּמִים 10	3	3	3
	הוּא יִשְׂרָתֵנִי:	2	2	2
	<b>Strophe 5</b> Total, v. 6	<u>10 = 8 + 2 = 10 + 0</u>		
	Total, v. 5-6	22 = 17 + 5 = 22 + 0		
7	לֹא־יֵשֵׁב בְּקִרְבֵי בֵיתִי 11	4	4	4
	עֲשֵׂה רַמְיָה	2	2	2
	דִּבֶּר שְׂקָרִים לֹא־יִכּוֹן 12	4	2	2
	לְגַגֵּר עֵינָי:	2	2	2
	<b>Strophe 6</b> Total, v. 7	<u>12 = 8 + 4 = 0 + 12</u>		
	Total, v. 5-7	34 = 25 + 9 = 15 + 19		
8	לְבַקְרִים אֲצַמִּית 13	2	2	2
	כָּל־רִשְׁעֵי־אֶרֶץ 14	3	3	3
	לְהַקְרִית מַעֲרֵי־יְהוָה	3	3	3
	כָּל־פְּעֻלֵי אֲוֶן:	3	3	3
	<b>Strophe 7</b> Total, v. 8	<u>11 = 5 + 6 = 11 + 0</u>		
	<b>Canto II</b> Total, v. 6-8	<u>33 = 21 + 12 = 21 + 12</u>		
	Total, v. 2-8	75 = 49 + 26 = 37 + 38		
	Total, v. 1-8	<u>81 = 52 + 29 = 43 + 38</u>		
	With the heading, total, v. 1-8	83 = 54 + 29		

## Observations

- Since the psalm has a very lucid poetical structure, its meaningful centre can easily be found: on verseline- and strophic level: **v. 5**, at the centre of the menorah. The sevenfold strophic structure, as proposed by Fokkelman - and Calès (1936) and Duhm (1922) before him -, is based on an arrangement of the verselines that does more justice to the poetic structure of the poem than the arrangement in (Masoretic) verses. Right through the psalm, each strophe has 2 verselines and 4 cola, which is perfectly in accordance with their conceptual content:

vs. 1-2b	Strophe 1	2 verselines	4 cola
vs. 2c-3b	Strophe 2	2 verselines	4 cola
vs. 3c-4	Strophe 3	2 verselines	4 cola
v. 5	Strophe 4	2 verselines	4 cola
v. 6	Strophe 5	2 verselines	4 cola
v. 7	Strophe 6	2 verselines	4 cola
v. 8	Strophe 7	2 verselines	4 cola.

Therefore, Strophe 4 clearly constitutes the meaningful centre:

מְלוֹשְׁנֵי בִסְתֵר רָעוּהוּ אוֹתוֹ אֲצַמִּית  
 וְגִבְהַעֵינָיִם וְרָחֵב לִבָּבָהּ אוֹתוֹ לֹא אוֹכֵל:

Whoever secretly slanders his neighbour him I will destroy;  
 Whoever has haughty looks and a proud heart him I will not tolerate.

The middle word, **אֲצַמִּית**, 'I will destroy' (in v. 5b), at the end of Canto I, has apparently the status of a keyword and can qualify as a meaningful centre (81 = 40 + 1 + 40). The more so, seeing its repetition (in v. 8a) at the end of Canto II.

2. The middle 15 words (vs. 4d-5) may also be considered a (larger) meaningful centre (81 = 33 + 15 + 33). However, seeing the evident preference - in all psalms from Psalm 90 onwards - for having a meaningful centre in terms of the poetical structure, their pivotal position may just be a matter of coincidence.
3. An ingenious feature of the psalm is the menorah framework of Canto I, in terms of the 7 actions of the first person speaker: 4 positive (Column c), and 3 negative (Column d):

- 1 v. 2a: I rhapsodize about the perfect path
- 2 v. 2c: I will walk in the integrity of my heart
- 3 v. 3a: I will not set before my eyes a wicked thing
- 4 v. 3c: I hate what devious persons do
- 5 v. 4b: I will have nothing to do with evil
- 6 v. 5a-b: Whoever secretly slanders his neighbour, him I will destroy
- 7 v. 5c-d: Whoever has haughty looks and a proud heart him I will not tolerate.

In terms of words, the actions are so arranged that the positive ones are made up of 22, and the negative ones of 26 words, thus generating an extra divine name number.

4. The divine name numbers feature in the text in the following way:
 

vs. 1-2	17 words in total (Column c)
vs. 1-5	17 words after atnach
vs. 1-5	26 words in total (Column d)
vs. 5-6	17 words before atnach
vs. 5-7	34 (2 x 17) words in total
vs. 2-8	26 words after atnach
vs. 1-8	52 (2 x 26) words before atnach.
5. The name יהוה occurs twice (1b and 8c), clearly functioning as a device for enclosure. Compare Psalms 8, 23, 70, 80, 82 (God), and 131.

© 2008  
 Dr. C.J. Labuschagne Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired),  
 Brinkhorst 44 University of Pretoria, South Africa  
 9751 AT Haren (Gron) and  
 The Netherlands Professor of Old Testament (retired),  
[labuschagne.cj@planet.nl](mailto:labuschagne.cj@planet.nl) University of Groningen, The Netherlands